

GURTOV: Despite the best efforts of our government to make it appear otherwise, the Vietnam war remains the most urgent foreign policy problem of the United States and the most corrosive influence on our domestic life.

Thousands of lives -- American, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Lao -- are being lost every week in a war whose legitimacy few Americans now seem to uphold.

The times demand extraordinary action if the policies of the United States are to change and finally embrace termination of American involvement in Indochina as our overriding and essential objective.

All of us should be grateful that a man has responded, at personal risk to his future freedom, in order that the people may know the full extent of our tragic involvement in Vietnam from 1945 to 1968.

The divulgence of the classified documents concerning U.S. decision-making on the war, and the decision of the major newspapers to publish them, are a national service in the highest traditions of patriotism.

The significance of the so-called Pentagon Papers goes well beyond history.

They draw the attention of persons inside and outside the administration to the disturbing parallels between past and present.

I refer not merely to the Nixon administration's pursuit of policies which, like those of preceding administrations, are in my judgment infeasible, unwise, and in some cases immoral and reckless.

Of greater concern to me is the continuation of a pattern of deception in American policy -- deception of the Congress and the American people.

The truth about U.S. objectives and activities in Indochina is being distorted or hidden as much now as before, and this circumstance is as intolerable as the policies themselves.

The public record of the Nixon administration by itself provides an adequate basis for reaching this conclusion. The record shows that, like previous administrations:

1. This administration aims at achieving a military victory in Vietnam while professing to be striving for complete withdrawal. The gradual reductions of U.S. ground forces should not divert attention from the expansion and intensification of U.S. air power throughout Indochina, the creation of a new commitment to the survival of a non-Communist regime in Cambodia, and the support, in contravention of the law (the Fulbright amendment), of South Vietnamese and Thai intervention in Laos.

2. This administration is not interested in negotiations to end American involvement except on terms that it knows North Vietnam cannot accept.

Calls for mutual troop withdrawals and cease-fires are not meaningful offers to bargain; the administration surely knows in advance that such proposals, because of the conditions attached to them, will never be acceptable to the other side.

3. This administration, while paying lip service to self-determination in South Vietnam, continues to prop up a regime that is taking steps to prevent the holding of competitive elections and the evolution of political accommodations among the contending Vietnamese factions.

4. This administration, while expressing concern for the safety and liberation of U.S. prisoners in North Vietnam, is in fact exploiting their captivity for domestic political purposes.

The increasing number of POW's in North Vietnam's camps enables the administration to rationalize the long-term presence of U.S. forces in Indochina and the necessity of escalation in North Vietnam.

The administration knows full well that the POW's will not be returned unless and until the United States sets a specific date for complete withdrawal from Vietnam.

5. This administration has willfully misled the American people to believe that its policies are consistently intended to extricate the United States from the war.

It portrays escalation as de-escalation and failure as success.

Intervention in Cambodia was not a response to a new threat from the sanctuaries but was a U.S.-ARVN initiative to exploit the overthrow of Sihanouk.

The widespread use of air power in Cambodia is not designed to speed our troop withdrawals but to support ARVN intervention and to sustain a militarily ineffective, unstable government.

"Protective reaction" strikes against North Vietnam are in fact attempts to punish Hanoi for continuing the war; they may also be warnings to Hanoi of U.S. willingness to restart the air war. Finally, the incursions in Laos did not demonstrate the ARVN's improvement but showed, ^{to} /the contrary, that "Vietnamization" cannot be carried out without heavy U.S. air and logistical support, and cannot succeed even with it.

6. This administration's "Vietnamization" policy is primarily a domestic political tactic, not a program for complete withdrawal.

Troop reductions are being geared to have maximum impact on the 1972 elections; they have far less to do with ARVN's performance.

Moreover, such reductions are meant to distract attention from an unprecedented application of aerial destructiveness that promises not only increasing suffering for the people of the three countries, but also more American prisoners of war.

When a government consistently deceives its people about the purposes of its policies, it must be called to account.

The leaders of previous administrations are now being judged by the people as the result of publication of the Pentagon Papers.

The fullest divulgence of the truth about present U.S. policies in Indochina can only come, however, when the public and the Congress demand it.

The public should insist that their representatives press the administration to report the extent and purpose of American bombing in northern and southern Laos, and the nature and objectives of U.S. support for South Vietnamese and Thai intervention in Laos and Cambodia.

The Congress should enact legislation to overhaul the system governing classified documents. Such legislation might establish a panel of individuals outside the government to monitor and recommend the rapid declassification of non-current materials; and it might set up a system to assure automatic receipt of government studies by the relevant Congressional committees.

But the most urgent business of the American people and the Congress is to work for the removal of the United States from the war in Indochina.

The administration must be persuaded to set a definite date for terminating U.S. involvement in return for the release of our prisoners and the unimpeded withdrawal of U.S. forces and bases from South Vietnam.

Such an arrangement is clearly obtainable; and public and Congressional pressure to secure it would constitute an appropriate and effective response to nearly twenty years of deceitful and fruitless government policy-making on Indochina.

FREDRICK: Like many American citizens, I am deeply concerned about the extent to which the administration and the media have attempted to gloss over the real messages of the Pentagon Papers by focusing attention on issues only peripherally related to the central questions raised by the documents.

I believe these diversions reflect a conscious effort on the part of the administration and the media to save face now that their past records have been exposed.

Even more serious, however, I believe that these diversions reflect a conscious effort to insure that we, the American public, will not see the critical link between the lies of the past and those of the present -- and the future.

In this regard, two points merit particular attention:

1. For twenty-five years, the U.S. government has not only been waging a war of destruction against the people of Indochina; through its influence over and manipulation of information related to U.S. policies and presence in Southeast Asia, it has also been waging a propaganda war against its own citizens.

This information war -- reinforced by strong elements of racism within this country -- has led to the dehumanization of the people and the culture of Vietnam in the eyes of the American public. It has also thereby conditioned our attitudes about U.S. foreign policy.

We do not see any evidence at this time to suggest that the present administration has decided to change this policy of propagandizing the American people.

Indeed, all evidence seems to point to the contrary. We might cite the administration's current attempts to downplay and even ignore the significance of the PRG's 7-point peace proposal of July 1, and of our government's efforts to hide from us the truth about the current political situation in Saigon as two very relevant examples.

Secondly, as the Pentagon Papers so clearly demonstrate, U. S. involvement in Indochina was neither accidental nor altruistic.

Rather U.S. policymakers were the willing heirs to French colonial policy -- a policy which depended on a program of "divide to rule" and of "Vietnamization" to impose and maintain its influence over an unwilling people -- just as does U.S. policy today.

The U.S., unlike the French, has not established an outright colonial regime in Saigon. Rather, we have attempted to rely on so-called "nationalist alternatives" as the most effective means of maintaining our influence in that country -- and thereby have ended up supporting the most un-nationalistic regimes of all: Diem and Khanh in the 1950s and 1960s, Thieu-Ky-Khiem today -- and tomorrow undoubtedly others of the same "nationalist" ilk, others who also during the Vietnamese war for independence from the French, fought against their own Vietnamese brothers and sisters on the side of the colonialists.

We see no evidence of a change in these policies under the present administration. Rather, the basic assumptions which

have determined U.S. policy in Indochina all these years seem more clearly influential today than ever.

RUSSO: When I was invited to participate today, I hesitated somewhat, because I am currently involved in litigation concerning the Pentagon Papers.

I have been sentenced to jail for refusing to testify before a Grand Jury, but after giving it some thought, I decided that I would come, because I think that one of the most important issues is really not touched by the Pentagon Papers.

As Mr. Long has pointed out, the Pentagon Papers say very little about the Vietnamese people, and in this war, we have in addition to the 45,000 Americans who died there, the many thousands more who are maimed, who have come home having lost their legs, their arms, their eyes, addicted to heroin; in addition to that, by very conservative estimates I have made in my studies of the war, the United States has been responsible for the death of between 500 thousand and one million Vietnamese.

In addition to that, there are of course Vietnamese who have been maimed, and whose lives have been effectively destroyed.

Virtually half the country has been driven to take refuge. This I think points up the fact that the United States did not learn anything from World War II.

In Vietnam we have conducted a genocidal war, and we have done our best to depersonalize the Vietnamese people, and I think that is perhaps the greatest sin of all.

The United States has always ignored the problems and

the realities of Vietnam, as it is now ignoring the problems and realities of our own situation here at home.

Vietnam to me is a reflection of that part of the American character which promotes social injustice here at home. I think that in addition, present policy with regard to Vietnam rests on as many lies and as much deceit as we see in the Pentagon Papers. The issue of Vietnamization, for example, is one of the biggest, or one of the most misleading kinds of things I think the present administration could come out with.

The Vietnamese Army, that is the Saigon Army, as long ago as 1954, seemed to be in very much the same shape as it is in today.

The Americans were saying then, give us a little more time, we will get things in shape, we will have the Air Force ready, and in just another year we will be organized.

Now, that was 17 years ago, and the Saigon Army has not progressed.

I think a great deal depends, in this situation, on motivation. The Saigon Army has no motivation other than to feather its own nest, that is, the elite of the Saigon Army feathering their own nest.

There is here the whole issue of Vietnamization, which I think is a blatant set of lies and deception.

The issue of our POW's in North Vietnam is -- I think -- very similar.

I am as concerned as anyone for Americans who have been held captive by the North Vietnamese; however, making them a pawn in this situation, I think, is the ultimate in hypocrisy.

I spent eighteen months in Vietnam interviewing Viet Cong prisoners in the jails of South Vietnam, and I learned a great deal.

I learned when I went to the jail that the jail keeper did not even have a list of those who were in the jail.

Not only that, but the prisoners were treated in a very inhumane fashion.

They were tortured, and at times they were summarily executed.

This to me is the ultimate in hypocrisy.

We make demands for lists and ask for information; we demand all of the information about the prisoners that are held in North Vietnam; however, even at the jails in South Vietnam, the jail keeper does not have a list of the names of the people who are being held there.

I think that the United States' involvement in Vietnam has been disastrous on all counts -- politically, socially, economically.

Politically the United States has incurred the world image of the absolutist bully.

By resorting to the destruction of the rural environment in order to deny the Viet Cong support -- because they found they could fight them in no other way in this political war -- they had to resort to a destruction of the very environment within which

the people lived. And by so doing, the United States has opened herself up to charges of genocide and imperialism.

I think The Encyclopedia Brittanica defines imperialism as the instance in which one country tries to control people outside of its own borders. I do not think that anybody can deny that is what the United States has attempted to do.

The determination of the Executive branch, through a number of administrations, to pursue, and even escalate, an undeclared war has set America into a drift towards absolutism, and her domestic unity and her foreign policy consensus has begun to crumble, and American youth are rebelling.

GURTOV: I would say that the administration has learned one thing from all of these years of American involvement, and that is how to pursue the same objectives as previous administrations, but knowing how to package them better.

I think Vietnamization is a classic example and certainly today the most important kind of new sales pitch that the administration has come up with to pursue the same goal as before, of preserving a non-Communist independent Vietnam, free from "external" influence. But by doing so in a number of different ways so as to disguise the fact it is pursuing those objectives, in terms of the impact on domestic opinion, which is terribly important, and which the administration clearly recognizes, the administration has gradually substituted air power for American ground power in order to reduce American casualties. That is an example of packaging.

Of course, the hope of the administration is that fewer American casualties will satisfy the American people, who will then ignore the fact that there is an increasing number of Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians, who are being killed, maimed, or losing their property.

Another example, I think, is the recent response of the United States government to the peace proposal in Paris.

It is interesting that after so many months of many hints of what the other side would give in return for our setting a firm timetable for withdrawal, the NLF and the North Vietnamese came out with a very clear statement, which indicated that this was in fact the trade-off that would come about -- prisoners for a timetable.

The administration found this very embarrassing, and its main response was not to consider what we should bargain for, and it was not to open up serious negotiations with the other side.

The question asked was: how do we package our rejection? And the way they packaged it was, first, by having the State Department say this proposal is interesting, but very complex and contains a number of ambiguities. Then finally, the order was given to Ambassador Bruce in Paris that he should pursue the matter with the other side, but, of course, in secret so that our refusal would not become public, and, therefore, become embarrassing.

Through these and other tactics, the administration is showing that the important thing about our Vietnam experience is really that you have to learn how to manipulate public opinion and the press and the Congress much better than previous administrations have.

RUSSO: The effect of the publication of the Pentagon Papers is that it has opened the eyes of the American public. I agree with Mr. Gurtov in that I think it has had no effect on the Nixon administration besides indicating to them that they are going to have to become a lot sharper with their public relations. By that I think I mean that the administration has not changed. I think its policy is still based on lies and deceit, and I think that it is probably looking for ways to be even more deceptive.

BRANFMAN: I would like to say briefly what has gone on since the Nixon administration took office. When Nixon took over, the bombing in North Vietnam stopped, Cambodia was in peace and the bombing of Laos was relatively moderate.

Since then, we have had the invasion of Cambodia and massive bombings in that country. We have doubled the bombing of Laos and we have resumed the bombing of North Vietnam, twice a week since the first of the year.

More relevant, I think, coming from Laos what struck me most was that while we are de-escalating Vietnam in terms of manpower, we are actually building up in terms of American manpower in Laos. There are more Americans directing military operations in

Laos, and over a million dollars have gone for American personnel in the last year.

Since the publication of the Pentagon Papers, we have had an invasion of Cambodia, and a military offensive against the Plain of Jars. So I think that there is no doubt that the war is not winding down.

The Pentagon Papers have had very little effect on the Executive determination to continue the war, which leads to the question of the problem of the system or the way it works. I would tend to say the problem is the system in the sense that I think what has gone on here, since the end of World War II, is that there has been a proliferation of technology which by its nature means more and more power. It is being centralized and used in the Executive branch. There is not very much hope in curtailing this power in the Congress, because I think most Congressmen basically agree with what is going on, and those who do not are often silent.

But I think a third factor, which is a key, and which is something that can be done is that those Congressmen who do oppose the war, but do not have the knowledge and do not have the facts, should go to the American public and bring this out. This is especially important now that we have an automated air war with almost no information getting out about it.

MIRSKY: We stand now, in my judgment, at a pivotal point. There are very few choices that remain for the policy makers of the United States. We can get out of Indochina forthwith; we can further escalate from Cambodia to Laos to North Vietnam; we can employ nuclear weapons; and it is still possible that we can directly challenge Peking.

Suppose we choose not to leave the Indochina scene at once. Why do I believe that escalation is the inevitable course? Let us examine the case of Laos. Why was this operation guaranteed to fail?

The entire invasion route was heavily fortified by the North Vietnamese who smashed the ARVN on the ground and shot more than 250 U.S. helicopters from the sky. We know from CIA reports that 30,000 Viet Cong had infiltrated the Saigon government to the highest levels, so it is no surprise that some kind of advance preparations were made.

The military failure in Laos can not, of course, alter the situation in that Kingdom which is already half dominated by the Pathet Lao. It can only weaken yet further the standing of the unsteady so-called "neutralist" Lao regime which explicitly asked the United States not to invade.

Nor has the Laos defeat done anything to strengthen Washington's allies in Cambodia where, since the 1969 May invasion, most of that country has fallen under the control of our adversaries.

In both Laos and Cambodia, as in South Vietnam, and this is the central point that I want to make, the populations tend to support our opponents because they protect the local people from American military operations.

"Our" Indochinese desert because they view themselves as fighting for foreigners, while by now our opponents are widely regarded as patriots.

Can we call again upon the shattered ARVN to do our dying for us? Is this Vietnamization? Shall we kill five or six thousand more ARVN troops to save American lives? In the words of Ambassador Bunker, did we only change the color of the corpses by invading two countries, and bombing three, to protect our President's credibility in a fourth?

The President is now facing a crisis. His conventional military means prove ineffective. (The word "conventional," of course, has to be used only in the American sense.) The ARVN won't fight and may mutiny.

Last year U.S. soldiers, reluctant to fight an ambiguous war, increasingly turned to drugs, refused orders, and even killed scores of their officers.

Shall we then, unable to achieve an end that we should never have desired, destroy the ancient cultures and peoples of Indochina because we cannot win their hearts and minds? Are their bodies so cheap?

The Senate Subcommittee on Refugees has recently stated: "In this year, 1971, more civilians are being killed and wounded in the three countries of Indochina and many more made refugees than at any time in history. Most of the casualties are caused, and people made refugees, by American and allied military activities."

Such melancholy assessments must cast doubt on the assertion that "the war is winding down," which is the present big lie. Four million South Vietnamese, one million Cambodians, and at least 600,000 Lao are refugees, the survivors of the more than a million civilians

killed by our bombing, our harassment and interdiction, our Phoenix assassination program which has claimed 20,000 lives, and our search and destroy policy. These people all bear witness to the failure of our vision and our intention in Indochina.

They exceed in number, but not in value, the 50,000 dead and 300,000 wounded Americans. The big question: Why have we allowed this to happen? I think it is because we have two standards of ^{our} morality -- one for ourselves and for communities, and one for far away.

We normally won't stand for murder, torture, and assault at home. We feel that inside ourselves, although we also know that many of us are potentially murderers, torturers and assaulters.

But, because we are potential murderers, torturers and assaulters, we are willing to entrust such acts to others at a distance. As long as the policy makers are willing to cloak our murder and torture in terms such as national defense, patriotism, obligation, and even responsibility, we allow the blood to continue to flow.

At the same time, every person in this room knows it is happening and he or she knows it is wrong.

The strain of the two standards, one for ourselves and another for far away, is tearing decent people in this country apart. A few weeks ago, in an address at Dartmouth, General Telford Taylor, one of the prosecutors at Nuremburg, after admitting that war crimes are being committed and that high officials may be responsible, warned the Dartmouth audience that our body politic can not stand an

investigation of the origins of American bestiality in Southeast Asia.

I think, on the contrary, that it has to stand that kind of investigation. When we face what we are, what we sometimes like to do, what we hide by letting others do it, we will be making a turn towards sanity.

Such an analysis will be agonizing for all of us, but without it, the numbness which we can all feel as it creeps inside us, will reach our hearts.

LONG: From the Pentagon Papers we have learned that because of total disregard for Vietnamese history, the United States has inflicted unprecedented suffering on a people whose only crime is their desire to be independent and to bring social justice to their country.

We have learned that the total lack of attention to human suffering on the part of the U.S. policy makers has made the United States use the most modern and most atrocious means to conduct this war against ^{the} innocent people of Indochina, thereby making it totally unacceptable for these people to reconcile themselves with the United States in any way short of the total withdrawal of all U.S. and other foreign troops from their countries.

The question, therefore, is how the American people and Congress can put pressure on the Nixon administration to end this senseless war. One way to do this is to address ourselves to the central issues, to inform the American public that the administration does not want to end the war.

To this end, one of the things that the Congress and informed individuals can do at the present time is to point out that the seven point peace proposal by the other side, in effect, meets every assertion that the Nixon administration, as well as the previous administrations, has made; and that failure on the part of the Nixon administration to come to any meaningful discussion based on the seven point peace proposal, in effect, reflects nothing but its desire to seek a military victory or the total destruction of the Indochinese people.

Another thing that American people and the Congress can do is to point out that the next election in Vietnam is an attempt by the United States to continue the war in Vietnam even if General Minh were elected. Everybody knows that General Minh was a collaborator with the French and had been most willing to cooperate with the United States in the early sixties.

Everybody knows that on December 25, 1970, Big Minh declared publicly in Saigon, "Whatever I do will be constitutional. I won't do anything that is unconstitutional." Since the constitution of South Vietnam was drafted with the help of Americans and since it officially outlaws the National Liberation Front, by having Big Minh elected on the peace ticket and then having him ask for continued American support the American government can score a propaganda coup against the American peace movement and clear the way for continued intervention in Vietnamese affairs.

LUCE: I don't think the war is winding down at all. I think the tactics are changing. That is, we are changing from a ground troop war to an air war. Certainly if you are a villager in Vietnam this doesn't make you feel any better because the villages are being bombed. When the village is bombed, more people are killed than when troops go through a village.

I see primarily a change in tactics rather than a war winding down. I see a change in American economic aid. For example, last year we gave \$21 million to the Saigon police force. This year we have increased it to \$30 million.

Last year we gave \$6.1 million to the whole education system. This year we have decreased this contribution to \$4.5 million, so that tactically we are changing from a ground war to an air war. In terms of our economic aid, we are changing our aid and giving more and more emphasis to military power.

We are now spending more than six times as much of our aid on the police work as we are on the whole education system. The war is not winding down.

I also think that one of the things we forget sometimes -- in talking about the questions of the rules of war and the constitutional laws and all -- is that it is not only in the hidden papers like the Pentagon Papers that our government advocates and condones the violations, but also that our very top government officials are doing this publicly.

For example, I would refer you to a May 3/^{,1970,}"Face the Nation"

speech of Vice President Spiro Agnew in which he said that our purpose for going in and bombing was, among other things, to destroy a hospital complex. This is a direct violation of Article 19 of the Geneva Convention on the treatment of war wounded. So these things are done openly and I believe this has passed without any notice here in the United States.